# PREPARING CALIFORNIA-GROWN SCHOOL MEALS

A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE





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#### CALIFORNIA FOOD FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS® downloadable resource

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**CALIFORNIA FOOD**FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS\*



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# PREPARING CALIFORNIA-GROWN SCHOOL MEALS

#### A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

The Center for Ecoliteracy developed *Preparing California-Grown School Meals* to facilitate school foodservice staff in serving more freshly prepared California crops. Increasing student consumption of California-grown fruits and vegetables supports student health and readiness to learn, benefits local economies and the environment, and helps students learn where their food comes from and how it reaches the table.

Preparing California-Grown School Meals offers step-by-step visual instructions that engage foodservice staff and inspire the confidence to incorporate cooking with fresh fruits and vegetables in school meal programs. It includes recipes that focus on fundamental knife skills and two culinary techniques: roasting and braising. Recipes are scaled for tasting portions so that foodservice staff have an opportunity to taste the results of their work, understand and practice essential skills, and experience how the same techniques can be used with a variety of foods.

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# ROASTING

Roasting is one of the oldest and simplest cooking techniques. During roasting, ingredients are exposed to steady oven heat that keeps their interiors moist while forming a crust on the exterior. Vegetables need a moderately high temperature (375 to 425 degrees) so that their moisture evaporates and concentrates before they become too brown.



#### **ROASTED POTATOES**

Roasted potatoes are a popular side dish to many proteins and can be enjoyed year round.

**INGREDIENTS:** 4 lbs red potatoes; 3 tbsp olive oil; 2 tsp kosher salt; 1 tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped (optional)



1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Place potatoes, cut in a large 3/4inch dice, into a bowl.



2. Add olive oil.



3. Add salt.



**4.** Mix ingredients until thoroughly coated.

#### **ROASTED POTATOES, CONTINUED**



**5.** Evenly distribute potatoes on a parchment-lined sheet pan, allowing space around each piece for air to circulate.



**6.** Place in oven to roast, rotating pan halfway into cooking.



7. Roast until the exterior is nicely browned and the interior is tender, approximately 30 minutes. Toss with rosemary for added flavor.



8. Enjoy.

#### **ROASTED BROCCOLI AND TOMATOES**

These vegetables are components of Roasted Vegetable Pasta Salad, page 38.

**INGREDIENTS:** 2 lbs broccoli florets; 1 qt + 2 cups cherry tomatoes; 1/4 cup olive oil; 1 tsp kosher salt; 3 tbsp garlic, minced; 3 tbsp Italian seasoning



1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cut evenly-sized florets from the broccoli crown.



2. Combine the florets and tomatoes in a bowl and add the olive oil.



**3.** Add the minced garlic.



4. Add salt.

#### ROASTED BROCCOLI AND TOMATOES, CONTINUED



**5.** Mix the ingredients until they are thoroughly coated with oil.



distribute the vegetables on a parchment-lined sheet pan, allowing space around each vegetable for the air to circulate.



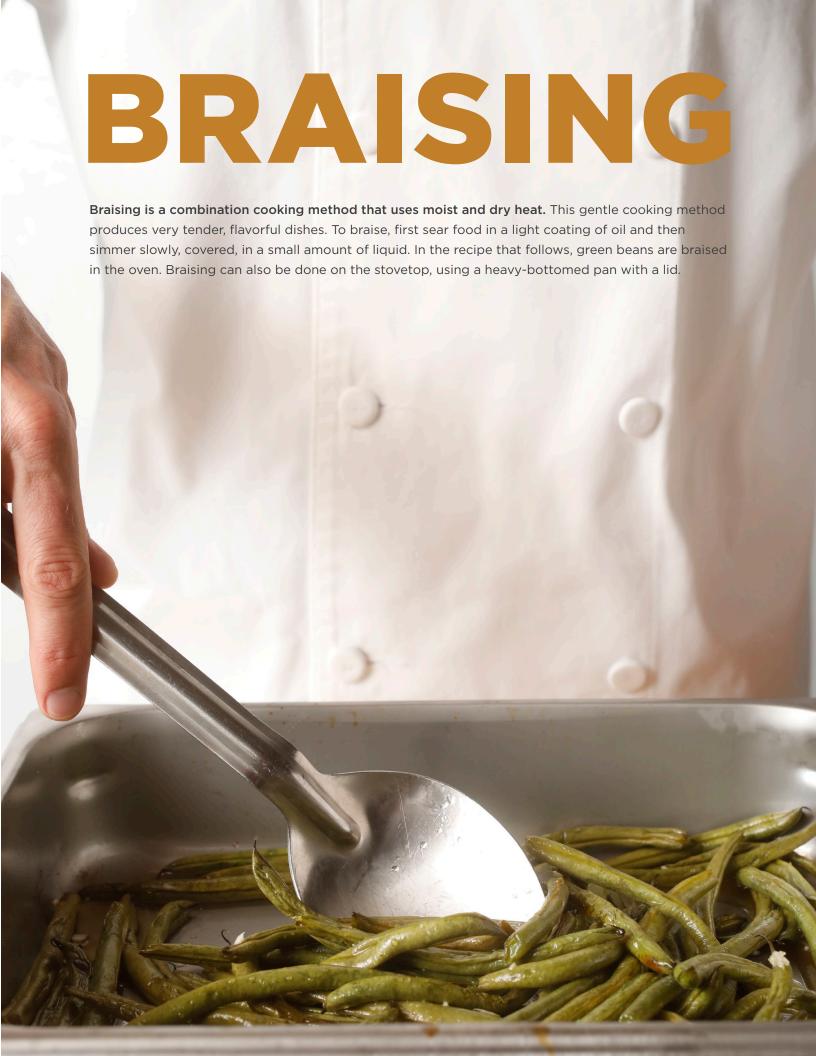
7. Place in oven to roast, rotating pan halfway into cooking.



8. Roast until tomatoes have softened and broccoli has become tender and lightly browned, about 15-20 minutes.



9. Enjoy.



#### **BRAISED GREEN BEANS**

Braised green beans are a delicious side dish and salad bar offering. See recipe on page 35.

**INGREDIENTS:** 1 lb fresh green beans; 1 tsp olive oil; 2 tsp garlic, minced; 3 tbsp lemon juice, 1/2 cup vegetable stock; 2/3 tsp salt; 1/3 tsp pepper



1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut stems off green beans by aligning small bunches of 6-10 beans and cutting just below the stem.



2. Add olive oil and fresh green beans to a hotel pan. Toss to combine.



**3.** Place in oven, uncovered.



4. Stir green beans 1-2 times until they begin to brown, about 8-12 minutes, depending on your oven.

#### BRAISED GREEN BEANS, CONTINUED



**5.** Add garlic, toss to combine, and heat an additional minute.



**6.** Add lemon juice.



**7.** Add vegetable stock.



**8.** Add salt and pepper.



9. Toss beans again and cover with foil. Place back in oven and cook until beans are tender but retain a slight crunch, about 10-15 minutes.



**10.** Enjoy.

### KNIFE SKILLS

Knives are the most important tools in your kitchen. Developing the skills to handle them is vital. Good knife skills will speed up your prep work, help prevent injury, and improve the flavor and texture of your food. The following series demonstrates key skills, including dicing an onion, mincing garlic, and chopping herbs.



#### **KNIFE SKILL BASICS**

Learning how to hold your knife and use your non-knife hand are critical to safety in the kitchen.

"Blade Grip"
The blade grip
provides a high
degree of control.
Place the handle
of the knife in
the palm of your
hand and hold the
top of the blade
just above the
bolster between
your thumb and
forefinger.



"The Claw" Properly positioning your non-knife hand will ensure vour cuts are safe and even. Curl your fingers back into a bear-claw position, keeping your thumb positioned behind your fingers. Lay the flat part of the knife blade against your knuckles to guide a smooth, even cutting motion. Move your knuckles back slowly with each cut, always keeping your thumb behind your fingers.

#### ONION, DICED



1. Cut off the top of the onion, leaving the root end (with the hair) intact.



2. Place the onion top-side down and cut it in half through the root.



**3.** Remove the tough outer skin.



4. Place open-palm hand on top of the onion half to stabilize it. Starting 1/2-inch above the cutting board, make a horizontal slice toward the root, being careful not to cut all the way through.



**5.** Repeat this action, moving up the onion in 1/2-inch increments 1 to 2 times, depending on the size of the onion.



6. Keeping the onion intact, make vertical slices perpendicular to the horizontal slices in 1/2-inch increments from one side of the onion to the other.

#### ONION, DICED, CONTINUED



7. Keeping the onion intact, slice across the previous slices in 1/2-inch increments to dice the onion.



**8.** Slice all the way down to the root. Discard root.



9. Diced onion.

#### **CARROT, SLICED**



**1.** Peel the carrot, if desired.



**2.** Cut off the top of the carrot.



**3.** To create a flat, stabilizing surface, cut a thin slice off one side of the thick end of the carrot.



**4.** Set the carrot flat-side down.



**5.** Cut diagonally—on the bias—for attractive slices with a large surface area.



**6.** Sliced carrot.

#### MELON, DICED



1. Cut off the top and bottom of the melon.



2. Stand the melon on one end. With the knife blade facing away from you, slice under the skin, following the contour of the melon with your blade to remove the skin in ribbons. Work your way around the entire melon.



**3.** Cut the melon in half.



**4.** Use a large spoon to scoop out seeds.



**5.** Cut the melon lengthwise into quarters.



**6.** Slice again, into eighths.

#### MELON, DICED, CONTINUED



**7.** Cut each slice into a large dice.



8. Diced melon.

#### **BELL PEPPER, DICED**



1. Hold the pepper with the stem pointing up. Start about 1/2-inch away from the stem, and slice off one quarter of the pepper, curving the knife to avoid the seeds and the white pith inside the pepper.



**2.** Repeat, slicing the pepper into quarters.



**3.** Discard the stem and seeds.



**4.** With the skin side down, slice 1/2 to 3/4-inch strips, lengthwise.



**5.** Evenly bunch 3 to 4 strips and slice them perpendicularly into 1/2 to 3/4-inch dice.



**6.** Diced bell pepper.

#### **GARLIC, MINCED**



**1.** Remove the cloves from a head of garlic.



2. Place the side of a chef's knife on a garlic clove with the blade angled down and pointing away. With your fingers safely extended away from the blade, use the heel of your palm to lightly crush the clove.



**3.** Remove the loosened skin from the clove.



4. Using the same technique as in Step 2, fully crush the garlic clove with the side of a chef's knife against the board.



**5.** Crushed garlic.



**6.** To mince the garlic, use the heel of your non-knife palm to hold down the tip of the knife blade. Use the knife handle to move the blade in a rapid chopping motion, keeping the tip of the knife in contact with the cutting board.

#### GARLIC, MINCED, CONTINUED



7. After one pass, mound the garlic into a pile and repeat the mincing motion until the garlic is chopped into small, uniform pieces.



**8.** Minced garlic.

#### APPLE, SLICED



1. Hold the apple with the stem pointing up. Position the knife roughly 1/2-inch from the stem.



**2.** Slice, avoiding the core.



**3.** Turn the apple one quarter turn and slice again. Repeat until you have cut four pieces away from the core.



4. Place each piece on the cutting board skin-side up. Use a cutting board designated for fruit to avoid the fruit absorbing other food flavors or smells, like garlic.



**5.** Slice each piece to desired thinness.



**6.** To avoid browning, dip sliced apples in fruit acid dilution (page 40) to prevent oxidation.

#### **GREEN ONION, SLICED**



1. Align the roots of a small bunch of washed green onions. Slice off roots.



**2.** Slice green onions on the bias to create an attractive shape.



**3.** Keep the green onions tightly bunched while slicing. Continue slicing until you reach the end of the bunch.



**4.** Sliced green onions.

#### CILANTRO, CHOPPED, MINCED



**1.** Cut stems off washed and bunched cilantro.



2. Bunch cilantro leaves closely together.



**3.** Chop leaves to desired size.



4. To mince, mound the chopped cilantro leaves into a pile. Use the heel of your non-knife palm to hold down the tip of the knife blade. Use the knife handle to move the blade in a rapid chopping motion.



**5.** After one pass, mound the cilantro into a pile and repeat the mincing motion until the cilantro is minced to the desired size.



**6.** Minced cilantro.

#### POTATO, LARGE DICE



**1.** Slice a washed potato in half lengthwise.



2. With the flat sides down, slice each half in half again lengthwise.



**3.** Slice the larger pieces into 3/4 or 1-inch pieces.



**4.** Large, evenly diced potato

### RECIPES

The following recipes emphasize the culinary and knife skills featured in this guide. They prominently feature California-grown fruits and vegetables and are scaled for tasting portions. Preparing and tasting a variety of dishes helps foodservice staff understand how these techniques can be used to include many different kinds of fresh fruits and vegetables throughout school menus.





### CUCUMBER, JICAMA, AND APPLE SALAD

From the Center for Ecoliteracy

Servings: 25

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

JICAMA, STICKS	3 LBS
CUCUMBERS	3 LBS
APPLES	5 EACH
LIME JUICE	1 CUP
CILANTRO, FRESH, CHOPPED	2 CUPS
SALT	2 TSP

- 1 Dice jicama sticks and cucumber into bite-sized pieces. Slice apples, tossing the core, and dice into bite-sized pieces.
- 2 Combine all ingredients together in a large bowl and mix well.
- **3** Serve cold.

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 45 servings. A 1/2 cup serving will provide:

• 1/2 cup vegetable



#### SUMMER SNAP PEA AND PEACH SALAD

Courtesy of Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

Servings: 25

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

PEACHES, FRESH	3 LBS + 12 OZ (ABOUT 11 EACH)
SUGAR SNAP PEAS, FRESH	1 LB + 4 OZ
LIME JUICE	3 TBSP
OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE	3/8 CUP
VINEGAR, BALSAMIC	3 TBSP
CHILE FLAKES	1 TSP
HONEY	3 TBSP
SALT	1 TSP

- 1 Slice peaches into 1/2-inch pieces. Discard snap pea stems and cut peas in half. Combine peaches and peas in a large container.
- 2 Whisk together lime juice, oil, vinegar, chile flakes, honey, and salt to make the dressing.
- 3 Pour the dressing over the peaches and peas and mix thoroughly. Serve chilled.

Note: If peaches are not in season, substitute with fresh strawberries, grapes, kiwi, or melon.

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 25 servings. A 2/3 cup serving will provide:

• 1/2 cup fruit/vegetable combined



#### CUCUMBER MELON MINT SALAD

#### Courtesy of Oakland Unified School District

Servings: 34

Serving Size: 1/2 cup

MELON, HONEYDEW, FRESH 1 MEDIUM, ABOUT 6 LBS

CUCUMBER, SLICED 2 QTS (ABOUT 3 LBS)

MINT, FRESH, CHOPPED 3/4 CUP (ABOUT 1 BUNCH)

LIME JUICE 1/2 CUP

OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE 1/2 CUP

POPPY SEEDS 1 TSP

HONEY 1-3/4 TSP

SALT 1/2 TSP

1 Wash melon thoroughly. Remove ends and peel using a knife. Cut into 1-inch cubes.

- 2 Combine melon with remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly.
- **3** Serve cold.

Meal Pattern Contribution: a 1/2 cup serving will provide:

• 3/8 cup fruit and vegetable combined



#### ZUCCHINI AND FETA SALAD

#### From the Center for Ecoliteracy

Servings: 25

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

ZUCCHINI, FRESH	8 LBS
CHEESE, FETA, CRUMBLED	1 LB
ONIONS, GREEN, CHOPPED	1 BUNCH
MINT, FRESH, CHOPPED	1 CUP
CHIVES, CHOPPED	1/2 CUP
OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE	1/3 CUP
LEMON JUICE	1/4 CUP
SALT	1 TSP
PEPPER	1 TSP

- 1 Using the grater attachment on a food processor or Robot Coupe, grate the zucchini.
- **2** Using a clean cloth or your hands, squeeze as much water as possible from the zucchini and drain.
- **3** In a large bowl, toss together the zucchini, feta, green onions, mint, chives, oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.
- 4 Serve cold.

Note: Add cooked couscous or bulgur wheat to make a whole grain salad. Halved cherry tomatoes could also be added.

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 44 servings. A 3/4 cup serving will provide:

- .25 meat/meat alternate
- 1/2 cup vegetable



#### GARDEN VEGETABLE CHILI

Courtesy of Lodi Unified School District

Servings: 50

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE 2 TBSP

ONIONS, RAW, DICED 3 EACH

GARLIC, MINCED 1 TBSP + 1 TSP

CELERY, RAW, CHOPPED 1 QT

CARROTS, RAW, SLICED 1 QT

CUMIN, GROUND 1 TBSP

CHILI POWDER 1/3 CUP

PAPRIKA 2 TSP

SALT 1/2 TSP

PEPPER 1 TSP

KIDNEY BEANS, CANNED, DRAINED 1 QT + 1 CUP (ABOUT 1/2 #10 CAN)

GARBANZO BEANS, CANNED, DRAINED 2-2/3 CUPS (ABOUT 1/4 #10 CAN)

BELL PEPPER, GREEN, RAW, CHOPPED 1 CUP

TOMATOES, CANNED, DICED 1 QT + 2 CUPS (#10 CAN)

CORN, FROZEN OR CANNED 3-1/2 CUPS

SPAGHETTI SAUCE, CANNED, MEATLESS 1 QT + 3-1/2 CUPS (ABOUT 2/3 #10 CAN)

TOMATO SAUCE, CANNED 3 CUPS (ABOUT 1/4 #10 CAN)

WATER 1 QT + 3/8 CUP

- 1 In a large stockpot, tilt skillet, or kettle, heat oil on medium-high heat. Add onions and garlic and sauté until translucent.
- **2** Add celery, carrots, cumin, chili powder, paprika, salt, and pepper to the onions. Cook until tender, but still crisp.
- **3** Add beans, bell pepper, tomatoes, corn, spaghetti sauce, tomato sauce, and water. Bring to a boil and cook for 15 minutes.



#### GARDEN VEGETABLE CHILI, CONT.

Courtesy of Lodi Unified School District

#### 4 Serve warm.

Note: For a complete school meal, serve with cornbread or tortilla chips.

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 25 servings. An 8 ounce serving will provide:

- 1.25 meat/meat alternates
- 1-3/8 cup vegetable



Servings: 15

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE	1 TSP
GREEN BEANS, FRESH, STEMS REMOVED	1LB
GARLIC, MINCED	2 TSP
LEMON JUICE	3 TBSP
VEGETABLE STOCK	1/2 CUP
SALT	2/3 TSP
PEPPER	1/3 TSP (PINCH)

- 1 Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
- 2 Add olive oil and fresh green beans to a hotel pan. Place in oven.
- **3** Stir beans several times until they begin to brown.
- **4** Add garlic and heat an additional minute. Add lemon juice, vegetable stock, salt, and pepper, and cover.
- 5 Cook until beans are tender but retain a slight crunch, about 15-20 minutes.

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 5 servings. A 1/3 cup serving of braised green beans will provide:

• 1/2 cup vegetable



#### CHILE VERDE WITH PORK

Courtesy of Natomas Unified School District

Servings: 25

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

TOMATILLOS, FRESH, STEMS/HUSKS REMOVED	3 LBS + 8 OZ
JALAPEÑOS, FRESH	3 EACH
PORK LEG	5 LBS
CORIANDER, WHOLE SEEDS	1/4 CUP
OREGANO, DRIED	1/2 CUP
CUMIN, GROUND	3/8 CUP
ONION, ROUGHLY CHOPPED	1 EACH
CILANTRO, FRESH	2-1/2 BUNCHES, DIVIDED
LIME JUICE	1/2 CUP
SALT	1 TSP
OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE	1/4 CUP
GARLIC, MINCED	1/4 CUP

- 1 Preheat oven broiler with a rack about 4 inches below heat.
- 2 Place tomatillos and jalapeños on a lined baking sheet and broil until they begin to blacken, about 5 minutes.
- **3** Remove from oven and flip tomatillos and peppers over. Return to broiler for another 5 minutes, until tomatillos are blistered with black spots.
- **4** Cut pork into 1/2-inch cubes. Place in large container or mixing bowl and add coriander, oregano, and cumin. Mix thoroughly.
- **5** Transfer tomatillos, jalapeños, and their juices to a food processor or blender. Add onion, 1 bunch cilantro, lime juice, and salt. Blend until smooth to make salsa verde.
- **6** Heat oil over medium heat in braising pan or tilt skillet. Cook pork and garlic, browning pork for about 3-5 minutes.



#### CHILE VERDE WITH PORK, CONT'D

Courtesy of Natomas Unified School District

- 7 Add salsa verde to pan. Simmer for 30 minutes, stirring periodically.
- **8** Chop remaining 1-1/2 bunches cilantro. Add to chile verde prior to serving, mix well, and reserve some for garnish on top.
- 9 Serve warm.

Note: For a complete school meal, serve over rice.

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 25 servings. A 3/4 cup serving of chile verde will provide:

- 1.75 meat/meat alternates
- 3/8 cup vegetable



#### ROASTED VEGETABLE PASTA SALAD

Courtesy of Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

Servings: 40

**Serving Size: Tasting Portion** 

PASTA, ROTINI, WHOLE-GRAIN 3 LBS + 12 OZ, DRY OIL, OLIVE OR VEGETABLE 3/8 CUP, DIVIDED **CHERRY TOMATOES** 1 QT + 2 CUPS BROCCOLI FLORETS, FRESH 2 LBS GARLIC, MINCED 3 TBSP SALT 1 TSP ITALIAN SEASONING 3 TBSP LEMON JUICE 1/4 CUP + 2 TSP CHEESE, PARMESAN, GRATED 2 CUPS + 2 TBSP

- 1 Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
- **2** Boil water in a large stockpot. Add pasta and cook until all dente, about 10 minutes. Rinse under cold water, drizzle with 2 Tbsp of the oil to prevent sticking, and place aside.
- 3 In a small mixing bowl, combine tomatoes, broccoli, garlic, salt, and Italian seasoning with remaining 1/4 cup of oil. Mix thoroughly so that everything is evenly coated.
- **4** Spread vegetables onto a sheet pan lined with parchment paper, leaving enough space around them so that they aren't touching. Use multiple sheet pans, if needed.
- **5** Roast vegetables in the oven, rotating the pan(s) halfway into cooking, until blistered and softened, about 15-20 minutes.
- **6** Gently toss together cooked pasta, roasted vegetables, lemon juice, and Parmesan cheese until thoroughly mixed.
- 7 Serve cold or slightly warm.

Note: For a complete school meal, add 4-1/2 pounds of diced chicken to this recipe.



### ROASTED VEGETABLE PASTA SALAD, CONT'D

Courtesy of Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

**Meal Pattern Contribution:** This recipe is for tasting portions. For a school meal, use the same recipe to yield 30 servings. A 1 cup serving of pasta salad will provide:

- 2 oz grains
- 5/8 cup vegetable

Meal Pattern Contribution with Chicken: A 1-1/4 cup serving of pasta salad will provide:

- 2.5 meat/meat alternate
- 2 oz grains
- 5/8 cup vegetable



Yield: 2-1/2 cups

LEMON JUICE	1/2 CUP
WATER	2 CUPS

1 To prevent fruit from discoloring, combine lemon juice and water and apply to cut fruit.

#### Notes:

- Always use a ratio of 1 part lemon juice to 4 parts water.
- Never apply straight lemon juice to fruit.
- Fruit should be lightly dressed with the dilution. Use an empty, clean dressing squeeze bottle to apply the dilution.
- Drain any excess liquid from the fruit or pan before serving or placing on the salad bar.
- Serving cut fruit, versus whole, helps increase student consumption and decrease food waste.



#### ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY

The Center for Ecoliteracy is an internationally recognized leader in systems change innovations in education for sustainable living. Since 1995, the Center has engaged with thousands of educators from across the United States and six continents. The Center offers publications, seminars, academic program audits, coaching for teaching and learning, in-depth curriculum development, keynote presentations, and technical assistance. Books authored or coauthored by the Center for Ecoliteracy include *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence* (Jossey-Bass, 2012); *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability* (Watershed Media, 2009); and *Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World* (Sierra Club Books, 2005).

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#### **PHOTOS**

Great thanks to photographer Craig Lee for his partnership in creating this beautiful collection of culinary photos. https://craigleephoto.com/